

彩霞園物語

はじまりの風は紅く

雪乃紗衣
SAI YUKINO

彩雲国物語

はじまりの風は紅く

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lang="en">

Saiunkoku Monogatari - Volume 01 Chapter 00-04

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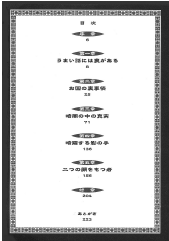
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Illustrations

These are the novel illustrations that were included in **Saiunkoku Monogatari** Volume 1



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Prologue

Legend tells of the establishment of the land of Saiunkoku.

The land of Saiunkoku was once infested by demons who threw the country into turmoil.

In the seemingly never-ending chaos, a youth went on a journey.

The youth slayed demons and monsters, sincerely praying for the safety and happiness of the people, while continuing his long never-ending journey.

Finally, his sincerity touched the eight gods.

Ran sage, Hong sage, Heki sage, Ko sage, Haku sage, Koku sage, Sa sage and the Shi sage — the Eight Coloured Sages named after the colours.

The sages used their divine powers to help the youth.

The youth's name was So Gen, and with the help of the Eight Coloured Sages, So Gen forged an era of peace with the nation of Saiunkoku and became its first emperor.

After the death of So Gen, the Eight Coloured Sages disappeared without a trace. However, the elegant palace built for the Eight Coloured Sages, named as the residence of the Eight Coloured Sages — Sento Palace, is said to stand in a corner of the royal palace. <Legend of the founding of Saiunkoku—Author unknown>

Prologue

In the late night, deep in the royal palace, a group of court ministers of state were having a secret discussion.

“.....indeed it is a big problem.”

“Exactly, it is a bad situation.”

“The emperor has already ascended the throne for half a year.”

“Are we really not able to do anything.....?”

“We originally thought that everything would turn out for the best.....”

“This group of old men really cannot follow the trend of the youths.”

“Rubbish! What kind of trend is that!?”

An old court minister of state roared resentfully. He was an active general in the battlefield during his youth, and even though he was over sixty, he had not changed his impatient temper even up to this day.

“But if this continues—”

“You are right, if this continues, it is hard to say that corrupted officials will not appear.”

“That’s not all; mutineers are planning to move as well.”

“The upmost important issue right now is—” One of the court ministers of state’s tone was clearly calmer than other court ministers of state, but with a worried look and said garrulously in a low voice: “..... to think of a solution to stop all rumours that is causing uproar.”

The court ministers immediately quietened down. Indeed, the upmost important issue right now was that problem.

“You, you are right!” Another court minister wiped his sweat and coughed dryly a few times.

“Instead of worrying about the corrupted officials that may appear, I think that it is most important to appease the emotions of the people.”

“But... We have already tried everything!”

“What should we do?”

“—I have a plan.”

As this man was the court minister with the most power in the country, his surroundings immediately fell silent; everyone looked at him with expectation.

“—as the saying goes:” the old court minister said, “the wife is also the husband’s nemesis.”

Chapter 1 - There Is No Free Meal in the World

Chapter 1: There is no free meal in this world[[edit](#)]

It was well-known to everyone that there would be a melodious and moving erhu music played from this Taoist temple at this time.

The music was indeed beautiful, hence attracting many customers to nearby tea-booths or restaurants at this specific time to listen. The music received praises from many people, but the popularity of the maiden playing the music was even greater than the Erhu,--only that the maiden does not know it herself.

Today, the lesson ended again by the children's pleading, the maiden — Kou Shuurei then played the Erhu, but she was not playing any music compositions today, instead she was playing the legend of the establishment of Saiunkoku that the children like. Following the end of the music, Shuurei ends the story as usual.

“.....in the end, the Eight Coloured Sages disappeared without a trace, and it is said that they have blended into the commoners' life, maybe as our neighbours!”

When Shuurei laughed: “Okay, the story has ended!” The children surrounding her let a sigh.

“Teacher Shuurei!”

“Yes?”

“Is there really a Sento Palace in the royal palace?”

Shuurei put her Erhu aside and smiled: “Yes,” and patted the boy's head.

“Although it is now known as Sento Province, but according to what Seiran said, it really resides in the royal palace somewhere.”

“Then has Teacher Shuurei seen it before?”

A cute girl with her hair in a bun climbed up Shuurei's lap.

Hearing this question, Shuurei let out a serious sigh of regret.

“Although it is regretful, I have not seen it before. I have always hoped to see it

at least once too, but it is a pity that the Sento Palace is in the royal palace. I could have gotten in if I had joined the state exam; however it is only opened to males.”

“Then I shall join the state exam when I grow up and become a great official. I shall marry Teacher Shuurei and then bring Teacher Shuurei into the royal palace.”

Looking at the energetic boy proudly standing tall, Shuurei couldn’t help smiling:

“Really? That will be great. –But Ryuujin, since you have now set your target, you should work even harder. I bet you forgot to finish your homework for yesterday, right?”

“That, that is because.....”

The boy was at a loss without knowing what to do; the girl, with the bun hairstyle hugging Shuurei, rolled out her tongue and made a cheeky face.

“You should stop daydreaming; you have never done your homework.”

“If Ryuujin wants to be an official, he should just follow Seiran, enter the state martial arts exam, and become a military official.

“Ah — Exactly! Because he is good at fighting! And he is only good at that.”

“But he is afraid of his mother and Teacher Shuurei. Isn’t he a bit too useless?”

“You, you guys.....”

The boy blushed and clenched his fists, but someone knocked at the temple door at this moment.

“Sorry, pardon my intrusion, Miss.”

When Shuurei saw the tall figure that entered the doors, she was surprised:

“—Seiran! Why are you here?”

“Ah—it’s Seiran!”

“Seiran! Let’s play some war games--!”

The youth that was immediately surrounded by the children, --Seiran showed a

wry smile.

“Erm.....Sorry, I am busy today, maybe next time?”

A boy let out a sigh of disappointment; the youth tapped the boy's forehead and moved towards Shuurei.

“Miss, could you please hurry back? You have an important visitor.”

“What--?” This time all the children shouted disappointingly.

Shuurei also groan inwardly due to this uninvited guest. –What a coincidence, I have a very important ‘job’ waiting for me today! Which gullible guest has chosen to visit us today? Even so, Shuurei still stood up quickly, caressing the head of the children that were tugging at her skirt, unwilling for her to leave.

“Sorry, we will have to end here today. Do not forget what was taught today, and Ryuujin, you have to do your homework.”

In a blink of an eye, Shuurei had left with Seiran; on the way, Shuurei wondered:

“Seiran, why are you here at this time? I thought you were supposed to go for a court meeting today?”

“Yes — Miss, you are right. But the guest requested that I travel together.....”

“The guest wanted you to return home due to personal reasons? –This guest's identity isn't simple then?”

“Yes, yes.....”

The vague answer made Shuurei even more suspicious.

Even though Seiran was courtly, he was actually strong in his swordsmanship. Therefore, even if Shuurei's family — Kou family only backs him in name, he still cut a striking figure with a new record, now a small standing in the military. Even though he has not amounted to much in the imperial court, but to be someone that can influence Seiran, the guest must be a big shot.

“I do not know who the guest is, or why he wanted to see me, but as courtesy, he should have informed me earlier. A sudden visit..... will ruin my plans and schedule!”

Shuurei clenched her fists, glared at Seiran, and held onto his shirt firmly.

“What should we do, Seiran--?” We are in an overdraft for this month again! There was a good-paying job, but it is all ruined now! I thought we would be able to afford rice with the pay, but only barley..... barley..... barley ah--! The middle line in the barley! That middle line that differentiates it from rice is going to mock me again this month : ‘I am not rice!’ Ah—I am not willing, not willing! I hate that guest~!”

“Miss! Nobody said that! Wheat can’t talk.”

Seiran, afraid of attracting sideways glances from passers-by, quickly looked around. This reaction was natural, after all Shuurei was standing in the streets yelling..... but the passers-by ignored her.

“Miss, please do not worry, I will take up more part time jobs. I still have to repair the roof tiles that were blown off a few days ago, otherwise it would be troublesome if it rains. Buckets are expensive, so I will go buy tiles and repair them myself. This will save quite a sum of money. I will also get some lattice doors from town to replace the broken ones..... Miss, please do not be sad, I love to eat barley, it’s very nutritious.”

“Waaaaaaaaaaa — Seiran! I am sorry! We’re always troubling you. If only my father was more useful, then we would not end up in this situation!”

“Miss should not be mindful of little things like this.”

“Because our Kou family couldn't pay their salaries, all the other servants have left..... but you have always stayed. A dignified military officer has to do the accounting for restaurants, write letters for others and do errands for merchants. In the entire world, only our Kou family orders people around like this.”

“.....”

It seems to be so, Seiran thought. “Originally, your salary would be sufficient for yourself, but staying in Kou family, you have to spend all your salary repairing our house and for our livelihood..... Even so, our family is still afraid and not willing to let you go find a better master, please forgive us! However, if you really find a better environment, then it is okay to not care about us.”

“Miss.”

Seiran interrupted Shuurei with a wry smile.

“Really, you do not have to mind about these. Unless you chase me out, I would not leave you. I have no complains, and I am actually happy that I am able to repay the kindness that your family has shown me.”

“Kindness.....?”

“13 years ago, the Kou family accepted and took me in even though I was a stranger. I am already determined that I will repay the grace with my life, so Miss, you should not brood on this at all.”

“.....Seiran.....”

Shuurei’s face distorted once more.

“Ay — so frustrating! Why did our family end up in this situation--! Only having a high status is totally useless-----!”

“.....”

Patting the back of Shuurei, Seiran nodded and agreed to this statement with mixed feelings.

(..... indeed high status ‘only’.....)

This can be seen from the surname of Kou.

Saiunkoku territories were split into eight states. They were the Ran state, Kou state, Heki state, Ko state, Haku state, Koku state, Sa state and the Shi state. These names of the states followed the old names. Six hundred years ago, the emperor ordered the ruling clan of each state to change their surnames on a whim. The Marquis of Ran state changed to Ran, the Marquis of the Kou state changed to Kou, and so on. At the same time, commoners were forbidden to share the same surname as these eight clans. Hence, having these eight colour surnames were a symbol of the nobles among the nobles. Due to the capital—where the imperial court resided, the Marquis of Shi state was the emperor. Since then, the Shi surname represented the surname of the royal family.

600 years later, the ruling system gradually changed from the Marquises ruling of the states to the imperial court ruling, but the seven surnames —Shi surname

being another matter as it was the royal family—still exists.

The imperial courts that used to consist of mostly the noble clans were now open to commoners too, through the official appointment system—state exam that had been implemented for decades, though the participants that were able to enter the final round were mostly members from the seven clans. This was because when the state exam was implemented, the seven clans were willing to spend large sums of money to nurture the talents, the result was obviously that the seven clans having many talented and outstanding men, and their popularity in its heyday. Once they were honoured with high official titles, they were able to get good wages; hence it caused no harm to the seven clans.

Shuurei was born in the Kou family — she was of pure lineage and the daughter of the eminent family. Kou family was only under the Ran family in terms of power among the seven clans, the noble among the nobles. It was said that the Shi representing the royal family was the combination of the Ran and Kou family, hence giving the Kou and Ran surname to two of the most powerful clans then.

(..... if so, Miss should be living a generous life, served by a large group of maids.)

No matter how ridiculous, she should not be crying on the streets that they could only eat barley for the month; their family being overdraft, the tiles being blown away, worrying about the leaking roof but having no money to repair and such.

Why did a lady of the Kou family end up in such a situation--?

The reason may be the eldest son of the Kou family, Shuurei's father, Shoka. Due to his gentle personality and love for literature from birth, there were frequent criticisms of him not being able to be family head; and there was his talented younger brother. Hence, before his death, Shoka's father instructed his brother to be the next head. Originally believing that he himself was not meant to be the head, Shoka had no complaints and was happy to follow the instructions of his father.

However, after his brother inherited the family business, Shoka's position as the eldest son became awkward. Therefore, after much consideration, he

decided to bring his whole family and leave the Kou state, but the Kou clan would never let the eldest son be displaced, hence they build a residence in the Shi state beforehand and arranged a high position in the imperial court for Shoka. Thus, Shoka's family migrated to the Shi state, and on the way, took in Seiran who fainted on the side of the road, then moved into the current residence.

The imperial high official was actually just a post responsible of taking care of the library, a post that was dispensable, not many people have even heard of this post. Hence the management of the financial board often forgot to pay Shoka his salary. Furthermore Shoka had never complained about this, thus his salary decreased gradually, until in the end it turned into the situation where everyone in the family — a total of three people, Shoka, Shuurei and Seiran — had to work to support themselves. Yet, Shoka was always buried in books. It was almost impossible to depend on him to support the family. Thus it was really only Shuurei and Seiran supporting the family.

Seiran thought of the past, his eyes becoming misty.

(.....I didn't think that huge residence would require such a high maintenance fee.....)

In the beginning, Shuurei and Seiran were optimistic as life was thrifty and as long as sufficient money was earned for 3 people, life could still go on, however.....

It was completely unexpected that in order to maintain the large residence as a suitable living environment, one actually had to spend more than half of their pay; since their salaries were dropping, the workload had only been increasing. Even though they strictly regulated Shoka to earn a certain amount of salary, he did not take it seriously. Once he entered the library, he would be free of 'distractions'.

"Miss.....Miss, you have tried really hard, you have been teaching children in the Taoist temple day in and day out after house chores, working until the sun sets..... Today must be a holiday given by God to Miss, furthermore my salary will be increasing soon....."

Shuurei looked up, her face filled with happiness.

“Does that mean you are going to be promoted again? Congratulation, Seiran! Alright, then I’ll pay for dinner today!”

“Ah? But.....”

“Relax! The ingredients may be few, but the methods of cooking are varied. Just the chance to showcase my skills. Just you watch, I will cook a table of amazing cuisine!”

Watching Shuurei walk happily, Seiran laughed softly.

What made Shuurei happy was not the rise in salary, but the promotion, and this thought made Seiran very pleased.

“One of the three Grand Officials of the Palace — Sho-Tai Shi!?”

After aggressively pressing Seiran who was being vague about the identity of the guest, the answer shocked Shuurei. She almost spilled the tea leaves on the floor. – close! Tea leaves were expensive, it can be seen how surprising the answer from Seiran was.

The three Grand Officials of the Palace were the mentors of the emperor. Their positions were just below the emperor, although they are not involved in the politics, they were still one of the hundred officials, and their power was even greater than the royals who were of lower seniority.

Furthermore, Sho-Tai Shi was the famed previous emperor’s right hand man, as the highly respected and prestigious minister.

To Shuurei, he was a legendary character.

“Why, why, why did Sho-Tai Shi come and see me!!”

“I have no idea.”

Seiran had no idea too. When Sho-Tai Shi had told him straightforwardly: “I want to talk to the young lady of Kou family, please pass on the message.” He did not really understand it at first, because he could not link ‘young lady of Kou family’ to Shuurei and the residence where Shuurei lived in did not have enough servants to pass on the message, and the lady was working outside during the day and not at home.

“.....Currently, is it only ‘that’ father dealing with that big shot.....?”

“.....Yes.”

“He actually didn’t serve tea to the guest.”

“.....Because Master do not know where the tea set is.”

Seiran smiled helplessly, while putting the buns onto the plate to be served as refreshments.

The messy dishes in the kitchen looked like the work of a burglar, but the most important tea set was untouched.Looked like he worked really hard but couldn’t find the tea set, the master’s ability in housework really makes people afraid to set expectations for him.

“.....forget it, at least he deserves to be praised for knowing to serve tea to guests, this is good considering his normal standard.”

Shuurei sighed deeply, and then carried the prepared tray.

At this moment, Shuurei’s movements changed. Her back became straighter, and her steps became smooth like flowing water. Her graceful movements always amazed Seiran. Not even the female officers in the royal palace had such perfect etiquette.

And because of this, Seiran always felt regretful. If Shuurei spends the rest of her life in the marketplace like this, it would be such a waste of her knowledge and upbringing.

Upon reaching the living room, the soft laughter from within surprised Shuurei.

“.....it seems that they are chatting agreeably, but father has no eloquence at all. Unless their interests are common?”

Or maybe it was Sho-Tai Shi deliberately catering to Father..... very possible, no, it is definitely the latter.

Just as Shuurei hid her expression, Seiran entered the living room, kneeling on his knees to his master and guest.

“—Master, Lady Shuurei has returned.”

“Oh, she has already returned?”

A man stood up upon hearing this, an approachable smile appearing on his face. He is the master of the mansion, Kou Shoka. Forty years old, but he has no beard, hence he looked like he was only about thirty.

“Erm..... Where’s..... the tea.....?”

Watching his master whisper hesitatingly, Seiran couldn't help laughing.

“Miss is carrying the tea here, and the red bean buns that Master likes the most.”

Hearing that, Shoka’s expression brightened up.

The straightforward reaction almost makes Seiran laugh out loud, but he immediately restrained himself as there were other people present, and it is impolite to laugh out loud.

After trying hard to adjust to a serious expression, Seiran slowly opened the door.

Shuurei entered the room gracefully, put down the tray, and moved back three steps, kneeling down on both knees.

“—Shuurei pays her respects to Sho-Tai Shi. Tai Shi specially came to see me, but I could not welcome you personally and made Tai Shi wait for me, I am deeply sorry, forgive us for the poor reception.”

Shuurei placed both hands in front of her chest, and did a perfect ceremony bow.

The old man observed Shuurei’s every action, nodded slightly and stood up.

“.....Please rise, Miss Shuurei.”

Shuurei couldn’t help raising her head.

Due to wrinkles left by the years, the long beard and his eyes which displayed wisdom — Tai Shi with his back straight, looked like a hundred year old tree. Shuurei unconsciously lowered her head.

“To be able to see the countenance of Sho-Tai Shi today, Shuurei is deeply honoured.”

“It’s fine, enough with the etiquette, let’s sit!— Seiran-san, take a seat too.”

Sho-Tai Shi said solemnly before Seiran could protest.

“This issue is related to Seiran-san too, come, both of you please sit.”

Shuurei and Seiran couldn't help but look at each other.What exactly was happening?

“Can you help to pour some tea for me? After drinking so much water, my stomach feels cold.”

Sho-Tai Shi seemed slightly uncomfortable while stroking his stomach. Hearing this, Shuurei looked at the table and her face immediately turned pale.

It looked like Father was unable to find the tea set, and went straight to serve water. Observing closely, there was a water bucket on the floor. It seemed that the water was taken from the well using the bucket, and then served using a bowl to scoop the water in front of Sho-Tai Shi. They were not feeding cows or horses — and, and the worst thing was that the guest was one of the most important officials!

(Father----!)

Shuurei cried secretly, yet Shoka is smiling happily, hoping that his daughter will praise him: “Well thought out.” Shuurei ignored her own feelings and immediately poured tea.

Sho-Tai Shi did not bring up the issue immediately, but sipped the tea, reached for a bun, and he was surprised:

“This delicacy is made by Miss Shuurei, right?”

“Ah, yes!Thank you Sho-Tai Shi for the compliment.”

Watching the buns disappear one by one, Shuurei was filled with anxiety. Although she had hoped that Sho-Tai Shi would start on the serious issue soon, she could not say it out loud.

“Feel free to eat more.”

Never kill the joy of the guest! —This was one of the teachings of her late mother. Never initiate a request, she must silently wait till the guest is willing to say it. Before that, she had do her best to serve the guest, placing herself in second place, these were the basics for dealing with guests.

(Mother, I understand.)

Shuurei carefully poured the tea into the cup. Seiran also looked as if nothing happened, and kept adding buns to Sho-Tai Shi's plate.

Sho-Tai Shi glanced at Shoka, Shoka spotted Sho-Tai Shi's glance, and smiled proudly. It seemed like he was saying: "See, these two children are very well-behaved right?"

After a moment of silence, Sho-Tai Shi coughed softly, and put down his cup.

"—Shuurei-san, Seiran-san!I ask for your forgiveness for coming uninvited. I have something to ask for your help."

Upon hearing this, Shuurei and Seiran sat up straight.

"If both of you are willing to accept this job — I will pay a reward."

Sho-Tai Shi extended his shriveled right hand.

Starting the discussion with money, Seiran couldn't help but be stunned, but Shuurei's reaction was different.—because she was responsible for managing the whole family's finance, she couldn't beat around the bush. While calculating and planning in her mind, she immediately replied.

"—how much is the pay? 50 copper? 500 copper?it, it can't be 5 silver?"

Sho-Tai Shi smiled proudly but did not nod, Shurei felt her palms were sweating. "..... This, can't be..... a big business.....!?"

Feeling the creepy atmosphere between the two, Shoka and Seiran slowly stepped back.

Sho-Tai Shi stared at her, almost shouting: "You are shocked, right!"

"—it's 500, gold!"

Shuurei's expression changed drastically. She couldn't believe her ears. This was sufficient to feed a family of 5 for 10 years — including the repair and maintenance fee for the big mansion, and every little luxury — this sum of money could feed the whole family with white rice every day.

"I accept--!! I am willing to do anything!"

No more barley! No more using buckets to contain the leaking water when it's

raining! That was the only thing going through her mind right now.

“Then!”

Sho-Tai Shi never asked whether Shuurei was sure, if she was unsure it would be troublesome.

“Seiran-san will then be promoted to be in the Habayashi Army, serving as His Majesty’s bodyguard.”

A leap of a few ranks in one go, Seiran still wondered if he misheard anything.

Sho-Tai Shi then announced seriously to Shuurei:

“—Miss Shurei, please enter the imperial harem as a princess consort.”

After that, Seiran described Shuurei's expression at that moment to be a unique and odd sight.

Chapter 2 - The Events of a Country

Chapter 3 - The Truth in the Darkness

Chapter 3: The truth in the darkness[[edit](#)]

In the midst of pitch darkness, cherry blossom petals continued to fall without end.

A figure approached. When he realized I was there, he smiled.

Like a small ripple, a warm feeling spread through my heart. Such happiness...

As I tried to get closer, that person went back the way he came.

---.....brother...?

I chased after the figure that was distancing itself from me. But regardless of how much I run, the gap continues to widen.

The hand that reached out so desperately was so small, like a maple leaf.

--Why.....

I felt like crying. That was the only person there for me.

Don't go. Don't go.

Don't leave me alone.

The cherry blossoms blew away. They became wisterias, they became sweet osmanthus..... they became snowflakes.

The figure blended in with the snow, and vanished.

I kept waiting. Through spring, through summer, through autumn, through winter. Always.

--Don't go.

I don't even dare to say those words.

--Don't go.

Just as I felt I was about to fall to my knees in despair, someone grabbed my hand firmly from behind.

Surprised.I turned around slowly.

--Waking with a start, the familiar face of a guard was right beside him.

".....Sei-ran.....?"

"Forgive me for presuming to enter without our permission. You were crying out in your sleep....."

The emperor slowly sat up on his bed. After taking the evening meal together with Shuurei and returning to his chambers, he'd apparently fell asleep.

He was covered in cold sweat. When he thought to wipe the sweat from his brow, the emperor finally realized that he was holding Seiran's hand.

Raising his arm while still holding that hand, Seiran hurriedly explained, "Ahhh..... umm, you reached out your hand and I unthinkingly..... I beg your pardon.

The Emperor still holding onto that hand, shook it up and down a couple of times.

".....Y-your majesty?"

Stopping his hands, the Emperor smiled.

"How about sleeping with me tonight, Seiran."

Seiran froze instantly. With an expression of having drunk pure vinegar on his face, it was obvious that he was trying, with all his might, to find some way out of his difficult situation. The Emperor cocked his head slightly.

"You don't want to."

"No..... Um, everyone has their own preferences. That is...

"I'm kidding," the Emperor said simply to a flustered Seiran, and smiled. "I just decided. I won't sleep with you."

"Whew....."

"It'd be too much of a waste."

"....."

Seiran wisely stayed silent.

The Emperor stared intently at Seiran.

".....as I thought. Seiran, aren't you a bit too masculine? Even though we're of a fairly similar age."

Having such a thing said so solemnly, Seiran was once again at a loss as to how to reply.

"I've been thinking recently, that it seems that Shuurei relies on you more than on me."

"....."

"You're a good man, so I can understand that. Also, you've been living together a long time. But, as Shuurei's husband, there are times when it annoys me."

"....."

"So, I think I'll go and bridge the gap with my wife."

The Emperor was very serious. Seiran trying to discern his intentions hesitantly asked, "And, i-in what way.....?"

The Emperor tilted his head and thought silently for a moment when he suddenly came up with a plan, "I know, I'll have her call me by name as well."

And reluctantly letting go of Seiran's hand, he quickly jumped out of bed.

"There's no need to guard my chambers tonight."

The Emperor started walking away wearing only his nightwear, astonishing Seiran.

"W-wait a moment!"

"Hm?"

"You'll catch a cold! For all that it's spring, it still gets cold at night, so you should wear something on top."

The Emperor laughed, "While I like Shuurei, I also like you, Seiran."

Leaving a beautifully shocked frozen Seiran behind, the Emperor ended up leaving his chambers wearing only his nightwear afterall.

The moon shone brightly that night.

The Emperor thought back over the past month as the cool breeze brushed his cheek.

His heart was surprisingly calm. He thought that this was what it meant to be at peace. Even when being scolded by Shuurei too for some reason would make him very happy, his face would relax resulting in Shuurei getting even angrier with him. Wanting to experience that more, he'd lied about a number of things but, he figured it was fine. --because Shuurei's face when angry was very cute.

Having someone be concerned about oneself.

That it would bring such happiness.

The Emperor dropped his gaze to both his palms --The many things he should be able to grasp in his hands. Was Shuurei's smile one of those things. He then realised that if he closed his hand, he could grasp it. But if he continued, as he had up until then, and left his hands open, it would fall through his fingers---

Up until then, he'd only had the barest of things in his hands.

Shouka, his place in the archives, the time he spent there-- those sorts of things which *to him* were very important, but small things. But he'd thought that it was fine that way. He long since given up wanting very much. --Except for one thing.

For that, he'd taken the throne he hadn't wanted. To him, it was only a temporary position. He wasn't the one who should be there. To protect the empty throne, being an Emperor in name, for when *that person* eventually returned. That's why while having taken the throne, he refused to be Emperor.

But then he met Shuurei.

He thought about if he could have her who had such unusual warmth. However, that was the same as letting go of the wish he'd so fervently hoped for up until then. She was a consort. Unless he were "Emperor" she couldn't be his. A breeze blew past. He looked at his palm-- and after a long moment slowly closed his fist.

Shusui looked up at the moon from inside the room.

"Time passed by so fast. --Has it been a month now?"

Shuurei leaned back against the sofa and sighed.

"How true. I wonder whether my coming here was worth it?"

"Of course."

Shusui squinted her eyes delightfully.

"The emperor seems to have changed in such a short time, slowly showing the prestige of a emperor. Hold the court every morning, then studied in the afternoon with the teachers, didn't Sho-Tai Shi say too, the impression of the emperor to all officials are already changing."

"Haha, you are right. The emperor has been hardworking, heard that he can voice out his opinions in the court now. Also, his majesty often voice out unexpected, sharp views in his lessons. Although he always is rebutted by Kouyuu-sama."

But Kouyuu also will listen to Ryuuki's opinions. Shuei disclosed that Kouyuu willing to listen to Ryuuki's opinions is already rare. If it is some insignificant things, he will settled it before rebutting.

"However, His majesty is still summoning men to his chamber every night....."

Only this point cannot be corrected. But, if Ryuuki changed back to straight will cause problems to Shuurei too.

Ta Ta Footstep sounds can be heard, Shuurei immediately readjust her sitting position. The person is Korin, holding a cup of fragrant tea in her hands.

"Exactly, we are troubled by it too."

Shusui watched Korin walk in, laughing:

"You have been eating with His Majesty, spending so much time together, and so close together, so why do u sleep separately at night? However everyone thinks it is just a matter of time, right? Korin."

Korin became energetic upon hearing, blushing.

"Everyone says that His Majesty treasure Consort Kou, since both are still

young, feelings can be cultivated slowly, but the older officials are dying to see the birth of the princes and princesses soon."

(Miss!) Shuurei can only shout in her heart.

"The maids has arranged the schedule, Consort Kou."

Hearing Korin's innocent reply, Shuurei almost dropped the tea cup. Schedule? What schedule!?

Shuurei focused all her attention on her face, trying to maintain her expressions to prevent cramps, managed to squeeze out a smile.

".....This, Korin, I appreciate your help, This, This thing needs the natural flow, and cannot be rushed, so thanks for your care."

Korin showed a expression of disappointment, but immediately show an adorable smile. Such a charming smile makes even Shuurei to want to move forward to hug her.

(.....Hai, Hai, if only I was as cute as her.....)

After comparing, her mood fell, as such she can't even compete with the beautiful Shusei.

"--Then please rest well, Consort Kou."

Korin retreat humbly, --Next moment, she rushed back. Seeing Korin rush in, Shuurei and Shusei got shocked at the same time. Rarely sees a strictly trained maid rushing.

"Oh no!"

Korin expressed agitated:

"His Majesty is here--!"

".....It's so late already, is there a matter?"

Ryuuki did not reply Shuurei's first question immediately.

Undid her hair, long flowing hair made Shuurei look more appealing, Ryuuki observed from head to bottom then whispered: "Ern..... I am here to bridge our gap."

"Ah? Gap?"

This man has always do random things, this action is even more confusing. Shuurei stunned, but found Ryuuki holding a stalk of rose in her right hand.

".....Ah, is this for me?"

Ryuuki nod like a kid.

"Really, what gap, if you want to gift flowers can just say it directly.... ah, you won't pick up the flower with your bare hand!? See! Full of injuries on your palm!"

Shuurei stared at Ryuuki's hand holding the rose, cannot help but raise her eyebrows.

"And why are you wearing so thin! Look at you shivering in the cold, nights in summer are still cold, why are you outside without wearing a coat!"

Shuurei dragged Ryuuki in without a word.

Seeing Shuurei's reaction same as Seiran's, Ryuuki smiled.Wearing thin is indeed the right choice.

First time entering Shuurei's chamber, Ryuuki looked around curiously. His view stopped at a flower in the vase. Place in the big vase is a.....?

".....Pink rose....."

Ryuuki pluck a whitish yellow rose, hearing his soft voice, Shuurei answered: "Ah, that is delivered by Seiran in the day, he said the rose bloomed."

Ryuuki frowned.indeed, Seiran is really a perfect man, always winning in every aspects.

But Shuurei misunderstood the sad expression of Ryuuki.

"Ah, I have not thank you yet. So sorry, I really like these flowers, Thank You."

Shuurei's smile made Ryuuki relieve.

Shuurei placed the rose in the vase in a neat action, and let Ryuuki sit on the corner of the bed.

"Come, show me your right hand!"

Ryuuki obediently open his palm, full of blood and thorns, Shuurei frowned:
"Really, why pluck the flower with bare hand? Don't you feel pain?"

It is painful, Ryuuki thinks. He didn't think so much then.

'Wait!'

Shuurei took her medical box, took out the pliers.

"I help u remove the thorns one by one, will take some time."

Holding Ryuuki's hand, Shuurei's eyes become wide open.

".....I say you....."

"En?"

".....Are you training sword?"

Rough palm, with a lot of hard callus. --Similar to Seiran's.

Ryuuki changed his expression slightly, showing a little hesitation.

".....This is the basic homework for royalty."

"Oh?"

Not knowing anything martial arts, Shuurei immediately accept this answer.

Ryuuki is relieved, and immediately remember his initial objective. --Right, I am here to bridge the gap!

".....Shuurei."

"En?"

"Lets call each other by our name."

"Name?"

"My name."

"Oh."

Focusing precise work, Shuurei answer vaguely, once she understand the meaning of the words she stop her action.

".....What?"

"I say, you can call me directly by name."

".....Why, why so sudden?"

"You don't call me by name seems unfair."

"This and fair or unfair....."

Totally not related! Shuurei thinks, but Ryuuki continues to stare.

"If my name is always not used, won't it be too pitiful."

This speech is not related to the previous lines, but they make sense too.

"So it is decided, will call me by name from now on."

".....Call you..... Ryuuki?"

Shuurei can't help muttering, Ryuuki blink, jumping for joy, such a happy smile made Shuurei surprised.

Ryuuki's expression of happiness beats Shuurei.

".....Alright, but only limited to privately."

His Majesty--Ryuuki nod furiously, feeling happy from achieving her initial objectives, then finally feeling the pain from the palm, the sharp pain is really not comfortable.

"Why does rose has thorns?"

Ryuuki angrily complain, Shuurei pluck the thorn while answering: "Because the princess of rose fell in love with a man."

Ryuuki blinked.

".....What you mean?"

Seeing his reaction, Shuurei got a shocked instead, she raise her head and stare at Ryuuki seriously.

".....You don't know this story?"

Seeing Ryuuki's blur expression, Shuurei's face turn dull. Everyone knows this story, this is a childhood story everyone heard in their childhood, but there is no one around him to tell him story.

Shuurei feel sympathetic, telling the story while plucking the thorns: ".....Very long ago, there is a very beautiful princess, name Rose Princess, she possess a magical power that can heal all illness and injuries, so there is plenty of suitors....."

Shuurei's voice sounds like a lullaby.

And after successfully bridging the gap, the burden in his heart lighten a lot.

And with the nightmare earlier-- although there is Seiran accompanying him making it better-- causing him to be tired, starts to snore off. This time he can finally.....have a good sleep.

After Shuurei finished the story, she has finished the treatment too.

"Ok, job well done."

Shuurei raise her head, saw Ryuuki sleeping like a log, can't help sighing.

"Can't do anything about you."

She moved Ryuuki's big body to the bed, and cover him with the blanket, then Shuurei has a headache.Where should I sleep now?

The bed can fit 3 adults, the space is more than sufficient. Seeing him sleep so heavily, impossible to just wake up, and he likes guys, will not cause any problems, so Shuurei came to a decision soon. She just has to wake up before the maids tomorrow.

Just in case, Shuurei also put a pillow in between them as a boundary.

With a pillow in between, with the Emperor and Consort lying at the sides sleeping.

Late at night --- while reading a book in the archives, Shouka raised an eyebrow slightly when he realize he had a visitor.

"--Kouyuu-dono?"

".....I'm sorry to disturb you so late. Would it be all right for me to sleep in the archives tonight?" Seeing the heavy fatigue in his face, Shouka quickly realized the problem. However, the courteous Shouka didn't say anything like 'You got

lost again, didn't you'.

"Of course, make yourself comfortable. Although it is small."

"As always, thank you very much."

Despite being silent a long time, Kouyuu was very depressed and rather upset that he'd ended up getting lost in the department of civil affairs where he worked. He didn't think that the cause was because he didn't simply follow along with someone else as he usually did. Perhaps it was possible that a certain ogre of a superior spread some medicine to throw off one's sense of direction. He felt like someone had moved the landmarks as well. Or maybe perhaps.....

".....Kouyuu-dono"

At the sound of Shouka's voice, Kouyuu was brought out of his whirling imaginations of victimization.

"Ah, y-yes!?"

"I heard you were summoned by the Senior Secretary of the Department of Civil Affairs but, did something happen?"

Unsure if Shouka noticed his momentary tension, Kouyuu quickly smiled slightly.

"--Yes, about work, a little.Ah that's right, there's something I wanted to ask you."

"What is it?"

"It's been about a month since I've been assigned as the Emperor's tutor. During that time, I've wondered about a number of things."

Shouka's expression changed slightly. Kouyuu continued, looking very serious.

"---I'll ask this bluntly. Could it be that the Emperor---

The next morning, Shuurei woke very slowly.

.....For some reason, it's unusually warm. That and something rather heavy is on top of me. It was a strangely comforting weight.

"Unnn....."

While still half in the world of dreams, the sound of the door opening could be heard.

"Kou-kihi-sama, it's morn....."

'It's not Shusui's voice.....' as she idly thought that, with the words having been cut off suddenly, for some reason, the sounds of someone rushing out and closing the door could be heard.

".....?"

Shuurei tried to shift her body. But her body didn't budge.

What had been on top of her..... or rather, what had been hanging on to her, wouldn't let her get up. Still half in her dreams, Shuurei forced her eyes open. Looking up slightly, a face was right there. The lowered lashes were very long and together they rankled on Shuurei's nerves.

(.....Aaahh-, come to think of it, only his looks are pretty good aren't they-.....) It's completely unlike the strangely childish impression one gets from his manner of speech but..... ..

Shuurei snapped awake at that moment.

(W-w-w-w-w-wait a minute----!!)

Shuurei had been sleeping with Ryuuki holding her. She tried to jump up but his arm was firmly wrapped around her and didn't budge a bit. Given the circumstance, Shuurei's face turned bright red.

"H...hey! Your Majesty! Wake up. Let go of me already. Emperor!!"

"Unnnn....."

Ryuuki sleepily opened his eyes. Finding Shuurei in his arms, he lovingly caressed her cheek with the back of his hand, smiling happily. Then with increasing strength, held her close.

"You said you'd call me by name....."

And he went back to sleep.

Shuurei shrieked.

"Don't sleep! Get up! Wake up. Wake up already----"

The servant who had come to wake Shuurei up today hadn't been Shusui and was the end of her luck.

The rumours had spread in the short time it took for them to eat breakfast.

"The Emperor's has shared his bed with a woman!" that sort of mistaken rumour, however, Shuurei couldn't deny it since she supposedly was his wife.

While she didn't say anything when the servants mentioned it, she complained clearly with her "isn't that nice!". Korin was teary eyed, finished preparing things for the morning meal three times faster than usual, and fled the room as though it would be wrong for her to be there and to leave them to themselves. There wasn't even a servant to wait on them. Shusui alone looked apologetic and stayed in a corner of the room.

Shuurei held her head. She looked at Ryuuki who was calmly eating breakfast resentfully. However, for some reason he was in an extremely good mood.

".....Ahhh sheesh. Why did you go past the pillow-....."

"Your face is red."

"___"

Shuurei threw her tea cup at him. However, Ryuuki caught it without problem. He was used to it now.

"That's dangerous isn't it."

"Unlike you, I'm not immune to that sort of thing! You idiot, you're the worst!!"

Shuurei slumped on the table.

"Ahhh---- Father and Seiran, what're they going to think when they hear this stupid rumour... what'll I do if they believe it-"

Ryuuki frowned annoyed. Shouka aside, "Why do you mention Seiran."

"But, but, but.....!! It's the young girl's heart. You won't understand." Shuurei said as though not answering. But somehow, it also seemed to make sense.

".....Hey."

"What?"

.....Nothing really ended up happening, right?" In truth, Shuurei only had a vague understanding of such things, and therefore couldn't determine on her own if something had or had not in fact happened. Actually, since the Emperor was attracted to men, such things shouldn't happen in the first place but, just in case. Just in case.

However, Ryuuki just looked away. Shuurei paled.

Chapter 4 - The Conspirator Pushing the Scenes

“—Whatever you want I will give you.”

He said so, then reached out a hand to me who lost everything.

The me then probably stared at him with eyes cold as glass beads, and gave him my hand like a mechanical doll – I still remember his warmth made my tears, which was thought to be dried up, burst out.

Live for him, this line seems to become my goal.

He kept his promise, gave me everything I wanted, other than the last strong desire that I couldn't say.

His wish, his desire, let me finish it--.

After making sure that Shuurei is deep asleep, Ryuuki abruptly sat up. With his hands lightly searching around the pillow, he took out a “certain object” under the mattress when he touched a hump.

“... .. it's a sachet... ..”

Ryuuki put the sachet into his arms and walked down the bed, walking in the room as usual, and searched around the room. Even though there are no lights, his steps has no hesitation. Searching under the mattress with his hands, he found a paper man stuck underneath this time.

Shaking this seemingly ominous paper man, he stacked it and kept in his arms too.

Other than that, he first found 3 paper man that night, then he took out aroma wood from the furnace, he checked the desk interior and removed the shaving knives, opened the dressing box and tried all the cosmetic inside, his actions appear rather smooth. He finally took the silver tea set given by Shouka and examined it under the moon light carefully.

Ryuuki squinted his eyes, and slowly examined the silver cups.

As he examine, he looks at Shuurei sleeping soundly on the bed.

The serene sleeping Shuurei made Ryuuki's expressions gentler, but quickly, he

turned and looked at the numerous “battle spoils” he confiscated that night, he can’t help folding his eyebrow.

“... .. it’s almost time.”

Recently losing things –Shuurei thinks.

From a honourable family, Shuurei shouldn’t mind these small matters, yet Shuurei has developed the habit to take note of the things around her. Taking hold of all the resources, using the resources to its fullest is the first step to frugal.

Hence with Shuurei’s keen eyes, she soon discovered a lot of small objects disappearing.

Furthermore... ..

Strangely, they will reappear in another unique way. No, should say that— “... .. This is for me?”

General Ran passed a sachet while smiling, stating that this is the trinkets most popular with young girls.

“I think this sachet can showcase Lady Shuurei’s pureness, while helping with sleep.”

Winking while saying, and sent a kiss. A handsome man doing this action is especially charming.

And Kouyuu gave a stationary case, inkstone, and brush etc, all kinds of stationary included.

“—Work hard, you have a lot of potential, don’t take this as tool box.”

That is a silver coated raden (Note: Lacquer or carving utensils’s surface, embed with different kinds of thin shells as decorations, are known as raden.) art masterpiece, and Kouyuu also unconsciously used the highest compliments “highly potential” on Shuurei, made Shuurei who always secretly admire Kouyuu’s knowledge very happy, after calming down then she realise that her stationary box just disappeared recently.

Afterword

Afterword[[edit](#)]

Hello everyone, I am Sai Yukino.

<Saiunkoku Monogatari> is my first work, it is a work that has won a prize, changed its title through (a great) change and became this.

I am writing this for the readers who are used to reading the afterword first. Although the story has a little of China style, but the content is not quite deep. Ah, it's because I did not study enough of China's attainments, so the characters have no font size! ... Because, if there are too many names it will be messy... I'm saying for me... (←an idiot)

Oh yes, after this volume is published, I have decided to publish short stories of Saiunkoku in the magazine <The Beans>. The story will take place slightly before this volume, the main characters are Kouyuu and Shuei. In this short story, the elusive superior of Kouyuu shall appear... probably. If you are interested, you're welcome to come and read. (Editors' note: <The Beans> is only selling in Japan at the moment)

I'm very grateful to the editor in charge, and I express my utmost gratitude to Kari Yura-sensei who is in charge of the illustrations. This is a large shock for me who is a newbie, when I sleep I even place the sketches of the cover by my pillow. Furthermore I want to express my thanks to the readers who brought this book. I welcome everyone to send letters to tell me of what you think after reading this book.

... Ah--, one page is so short, lastly I am slightly apologetic to everyone, I want to talk of some personal matters, this volume is for the first friend in my life, until the end she was a good friend (I don't want to say it like this until now...) Keiko Nakata-san.

Then, if there is still (a one-percent) chance, I hope to meet everyone in the next volume.